Survive in style (5) - DIY Aspirin

by **bricobart** on June 28, 2015

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I prefer designing, building & crafting over watching TV & washing my car on sunday, following my nose instead of the road, doing things my way instead of reading the instructions, living my life by own choice & decisions instead of being led by traditions & mainstream. Beside that, I'm a quite normal person.

Intro: Survive in style (5) - DIY Aspirin

One of my worst ennemies - even more worse than ice cubes or coca cola that try to ruin my single malt - is something really vicious.

Headache. Since many years it's one of my closest - unwilled - friends. When I'm stressed it's there, when I'm tired it's there, when I drink too much it's there and when I'm drunk because I've been tired of being stressed, it's even more there.

Instead of attacking the cause of this pain, I prefer blowing the result. Totally me.

And so I'm taking pills, sometimes. Quite innocent stuff, but nevertheless a few hundred pills a year...

I know, it IS really bad and one day these chemicals are going to do bad things to me. Maybe The Evil is already there.

Whatever.

One of the most classic methods to fight pain, and headache in particular, is aspirin.

Since I like to think two steps in advance, I know that whenever I run out of pills in the outdoors, there's always a way to make this medicine by myself. Easy.

Step 1: Get some willow

Aspirin is based on salicylin, a chemical found in the bark of the willow tree. The therapeutic properties of willow tree bark have been known for at least 2,400 years, with Hippocrates prescribing it for headaches. Bark containing salicin was used by the Romans and Native Americans to treat cold, flu, aches, pains and infections. Salicylic acid, the active ingredient of aspirin, was first discovered from the bark of the willow tree in 1763 by Edward Stone of Wadham College, University of Oxford.

Thank you, Wikipedia.

So you need a willow. So far so good.

Willows, also called sallows, and osiers, form the genus Salix, around 400 species of deciduous trees and shrubs, found primarily on moist soils in cold and temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere. Most species are known as willow, but some narrow-leaved shrub species are called osier, and some broader-leaved species are referred to as sallow (from Old English sealh, related to the Latin word salix, willow). Some willows (particularly arctic and alpine species) are low-growing or creeping shrubs; for example, the dwarf willow (Salix herbacea) rarely exceeds 6 cm (2.4 in) in height, though it spreads widely across the ground.

Thanx again, Wikipedia.

Step 2: Cut some bark

Like Wiki said, the salisylic acid is mostly in the bark of willow trees.

To fight some headache you don't need a whole tree, just a handful - literally.

Use a hatchet or a knife to cut a handsized piece of bark from the tree.

Cut the four sides, the piece will peel off easily.

Again, this instructable isn't about 'mutilating trees' and 'showing it's ok'. It's about harvesting a natural resource without killing that source - aka responsible survival. Unless you're peeling half of the trees bark off the tree will repear itself quite fast. Before winter comes the wound will be sutured & dry.

Never cut the bark off all around the tree, because thàt's how you kill it.

Never cut more than one piece from a single tree.

Common sense & respect, that's the way to do it.

Step 3: Make chips

What you need is the pinky colored inner bark.

So remove the outer bark with your knife and tear the rest apart like a chicken breast. Or a turkey. Or an ostrich.

A real handful, I said.

Step 4: Boil & wait

Bring some water to boil in a pan, a bowl, a can, whatever - or use this method - and add the willow chips.

Let it boil for a few minutes. The water will color pink very fast.

Heat off & let it cool down.

Step 5: Use it wisely

What you made is not a weird kind of tea, but a 'decoction' - extracting plant extracts by boiling.

Like you'll guess, the salicylic acid is in that really nice looking magic potion.

No need to tell you that this drink is used to be a quite effective liquid to ease pain or infections, and that you're supposed to use it wisely.

I'm not your father - unless it is you, lost son - and I'm not telling you what to do and what not. I just want you to know that this is an instructable showing you how to deal with pain in a potential life-risking situation. Sometimes you won't be able to treat the cause in situ, and calming the pain down can help you to reset your mind and get out of the danger zone.

This grandma's remedy is meant to arm you with knowledge, not to stimulate you to do stupid things.

Use it wisely, and stay safe out there.

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9 Unusual Uses for Aspirin by wilgubeast

30 Item Ultimate Altoids Tin Urban Survival Kit (includes sunglasses, a deck of cards, and ketchup) by sherrycayheyhey

Making Wind -- in the Willow's -- and a Lamp by Vyger

PCRT Headache Relief Tablets (Potassium Chlorate Reaction Test) by TrollFaceTheMan

Pocket sized survival kit by LinuxH4x0r

Willow Whistle by shoemaker

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